

Carl Brecheen and Paul Faulkner

**What Every Family Needs** (*Sklad u obitelji*)

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The authors, Carl Brecheen and Paul Faulkner, are Christian workers who conduct a counseling center for marital issues and hold marriage seminars, and their book, *What Every Family Needs*, is published by the Gospel Advocate Company from Nashville, TN. Taking into consideration the large amount of practical advice offered in the book, it could almost be regarded as a manual. By observing the family as a basic societal group which usually consists, in the modern world, of one or two parents and their children, the question arises about the content of the words *unity* and *family*, and the interrelation between *unity* and the *family*.

From a Christian perspective, the foundation of a family is marriage, but in the modern evolution of the family, a philosophy is surfacing in which marriage represents a mere contract that can be abolished if found unpleasing to one of the members. Family and marriage thus become the playgrounds of selfishness and selfish passion, void of responsibility, love or security. As Phil Bosmans writes, the family begins with the love of two people who invite a new little person to be born into a warm, protected home. Where a child is accepted in love, there it becomes a gift. Where it is wanted and welcomed, there, in the quietness, an oasis comes into existence. Who rejoices over a child, rejoices over life.

In their book, the authors point out that the family characterizes the reality of fellowship – it is built by the fellowship of people permeated with love which “never ceases” (1 Co 13:8). In families, as in marriages, there exists a range of human relationships, such as the transition from engagement to partnership, roles as parents, and sibling relationships, but all of them have the same goal – to bring a person into the family. The book highlights some practical and possible ways of solving marital and family problems, of developing a deeper relationship between husband and wife, of building respectful communication, as well as of growing in self-respect, of maturing in sexuality, and of raising children and young adults. There are seven steps offered for building self-respect in children, eleven guidelines to better communication, six principles for positive discipline, and ten commands for raising children, and it includes tests for evaluating the development of the marital relationship.

The subtitles of the book, which consists of three parts, illustratively display its definition of family unity. This unity can be grasped by a formula: 1 (me) plus 1 (my spouse) = 1 (our family). This is exactly how the three parts of the book are outlined. In the first part, the authors lead the reader from a problem that lies in the heart of a person – selfishness – to a process of husbands helping

their wives, wives loving their husbands, and both husbands and wives finally manifesting self-respect through self-expression. In this part of the book, the problem of selfishness is specially emphasized as clouding one's judgment because selfishness is never satisfied; it is not worthwhile because it is expensive, it does not accomplish anything in the long run, it is in opposition to God's ways, makes a person unruly, prevents growth of the spirit, limits freedom, causes disagreements, and worse, it separates the person from God. The relationship between a husband and wife is best presented by the note: "The leader does not sit at the head of the table, but at the end."

The second part is focused on three areas described in several chapters that are aimed at enhancing the marital relationship through unconditional love, effective communication and sexual intimacy. Love is especially highlighted in this part with an emphasis on the source of love, which is God's love for people as described in 1 Corinthians 13. The third part concerns the family and it deals in several chapters with family priorities, parenthood, parenting children in their youth, creative order, and as a crown, the relationship between God and the family. The authors uphold, among the rest, the meaning of positive discipline and the necessity for setting personal and family devotional times.

The book, *What Every Family Needs*, offers practical steps based on biblical principles for every area of family life, and they apply to actual marital and family situations. The authors indicate solutions that are neither "instant" nor a type of "fast food" – ready solutions that can guarantee successful results, regardless of their lifetime – but advice which, if applied, can help build and establish unity, discipline and success in a family on a personal, as well as marital and family level.

As it is written in the epistle of James, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (Jas 2:17-26). The solutions offered in this book are written in a simple way, acceptable and specific, and they offer functional help, not just theories. The book, *What Every Family Needs*, is like a pearl among family related literature, especially with its Christian foundations. This pearl is not intended only for individuals and families whose foundation is Jesus Christ, but even more for the families who wander aimlessly in their attempt to find unity, in their search for successful communication and their desire to build the link that represents the basis of every society. That link is the family, but the link that shines as the brightest pearl is a harmonious family.

Robert Bogešić

Translated by Ljubinka Jambrek